

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 7, 2003

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the sentencing today of Tobias Reed, age 29, of Alexandria, Virginia, by the Honorable Claude M. Hilton, Chief Judge United States District Court, to 360 months incarceration for conspiracy to distribute crack.

From 1990 to 2000, a multi-defendant crack and marijuana conspiracy operated in and near what drug dealers called "the Hole" in Alexandria, Virginia. The Hole is a confluence of three streets (Dale and Edison Streets and Mark Drive) directly behind a recreation center and a public elementary school (Cora Kelly Magnet School (grades K-5)) in the Del Ray Section of the city.

In the 1990s, according to citizen complaints, defendants, and government witnesses, the conspiracy was centered in the Hole on a "24/7" basis and involved not only a high level of drug trafficking activity, but associated shootings, violence, assaults, and prostitution as well.

The defendants combined and pooled their drug proceeds to purchase 62-250 grams of crack on multiple occasions for further distribution in and near the Hole. They also directed and distributed crack to juveniles, some of whom attended Cora Kelly School. In addition, conspirators frequented a popular Del Ray barbershop very close to the Hole. The shop and its relatively small parking lot were used as a hangout for crack and marijuana dealers and a location of choice for multiple drug transactions. Saint Rita's Catholic Church and School (grades K-8) shared part of the lot as a playground, and drug activity occurred when school children were using the playground.

In 1999, the United States Attorney's Office began Operation "Dirty Dozen," an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force ("OCDETF") investigation involving federal, state, and local law enforcement. Thirty two defendants have pled guilty to drug trafficking, gun charges, and money laundering. Two defendants, one of whom was sentenced to life, were convicted after a jury trial. In addition, the investigation has resulted in the seizure of 24 firearms from defendants who were involved in drug trafficking. In the Hole, conspirators used backyards, alleyways, and barbecue grills as repositories for numerous firearms.

A driving factor behind the OCDETF investigation was numerous concerns and complaints by residents and a citizen association in Del Ray. According to officials with the Cora Kelly School, Saint Rita's School, and citizens association leaders, the level of apparent drug and criminal activity around the schools and the barbershop in Del Ray has almost been completely eradicated as a result of federal efforts.

Mr. McNulty stated: "This case demonstrates what can be accomplished when the public and law enforcement join forces to rid our communities of those who prey on our children and our citizens. Our goal was to restore this neighborhood and to make it a safe place for people to live and work and for children to play."

The case was investigated by members of the Mid-Atlantic High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and the Alexandria Police Department, and prosecuted for the United States by AUSA Gene Rossi and SAUSA Sonya Sacks.

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